

# **Entrepreneurship in Morocco: An Empirical Study of Motives, Barriers, and Determinants of Success**

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*Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in Morocco's economy in terms of job creation and GDP. It is therefore essential to better understand how SMEs are created and developed in order to render the economy more resilient. This research attempted to identify Moroccan entrepreneurs' motives for self-employment, which determinants of success they saw as most important, and which obstacles they identified as major business threats. In that perspective, a questionnaire derived from the literature was administered to a sample of 245 Moroccan entrepreneurs. Results revealed that Moroccan entrepreneurs were primarily motivated by economic, or extrinsic goals, by opposition to intrinsic goals such as a desire for autonomy and independence. Moroccan entrepreneurs were also more likely to favor success variables related to personal characteristics such as business training, field experience and marketing skills, while the lack of reliable personnel, strong competition, and a weak economy were perceived as major barriers to entrepreneurial success.*

*Keywords: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial motives, determinants of business success, business barriers or threats, SMEs, emerging countries entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA)*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) play a major role in the world economy (El Tarabishy and Pastran, 2022). With 93 percent of a total of about 290,000 firms belonging to the SME category in 2020 (under 200 employees), Morocco is no exception, as 64 percent of local companies are micro enterprises (under ten employees) and 29 percent are small firms; the remaining 7 percent being large businesses. According to HCP (2019) almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the SMEs are concentrated in the Casablanca-Tangier regional area:

38.5 percent of the companies are located in the Casablanca-Settat region, 14.7 percent in the Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region and 8.7 percent in the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region. They also provide employment to 73.8 percent of the workforce (OMTPME, 2022, p. 82).

In Morocco, SMEs have a strong presence in the Trade sector, and in the Car and Motorcycle Repair sector, generating respectively 48 percent and 64 percent of the value added within these sectors (OMTPME, 2020). However, over 51 percent of the SMEs were in sectors most vulnerable to Covid-19 (trade, car repair, transportation and warehousing, accommodation and restauration), according to OMTPME 2022. Moreover, these sectors represented 46 percent of employment and 30 percent of exports, 33 percent of investments and 38 percent of Morocco's GDP (OMTPME, 2021). Othmane and Mama (2016) reported that Morocco's economy also involves informal economic activities that remain unregistered in order to evade taxes, regulations, and avoid formal reporting. Morocco being a country where the local currency is not convertible and foreign exchange under control, people tend to resort to informal options to obtain payment for services, particularly in the micro business sector.

Nevertheless, Morocco is the third largest economy in North Africa and the fifth largest of the African continent, with a GDP of \$142.86 billion in 2021 (World Bank, 2023a). According to the World Bank (2023b), Morocco recorded a real GDP growth of 7.9 percent in 2021 after a drop of 6.9 percent in 2020 during the Covid19 pandemic. The country experienced a severed drought in 2022, which affected crops, and was also impacted by the Ukraine invasion with an 8.2 percent inflation at the end of 2022: as a result, GDP growth for 2022 was reduced to 1.2 percent in real terms. The growth outlook was expected to be more sustained at 3.2 percent in 2023 thanks to the rebound of the primary sector. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index 2016-2017 and 2018-2019, Morocco ranked 70th and 75th out of a total of 138, and 141 countries and was considered to be at the stage of a country driven by efficiency concerns (WEF, 2016; WEF 2019).

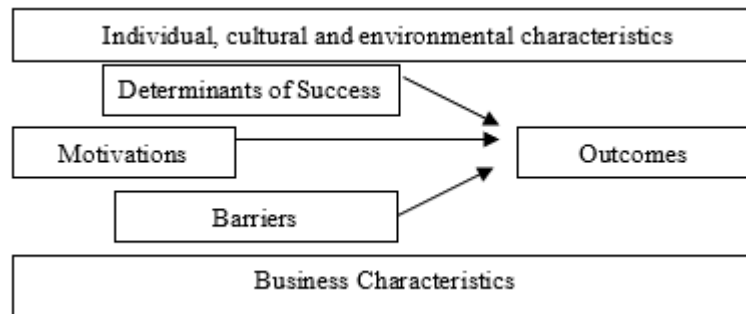
Morocco has historically been controlled by countries in the North, or vice-versa, to which it exports, i.e. territories of the former Almoravid and then Almohad kingdoms between 1070 and 1269 covering up to half of the Iberian Peninsula (Levi Provençal, 1928; Allali, 2008; Buresi, 2008). Currently, Morocco's economy benefits from formal trade agreements with its northern economic partners, including agreements on the movement of people and capital. For example, many Moroccan expatriates work in northern countries, while continuing to support the economy of their home country through remittances to their families. Morocco has also developed an important tourism industry representing nine percent of the companies, while the automotive sector exports almost 70 percent of its production (MIC, 2023).

Given these reasons and the importance of the contribution of SMEs to the Moroccan economy, it is essential to better understand how SMEs are created and developed in order to build a stronger economy. To do so, this study identified and analyzed the entrepreneurial motives, perceived determinants of success, and barriers identified by a sample of 245 respondent entrepreneurs from Morocco. In addition to the importance of SMEs in the Moroccan economy in terms of job creation and GDP, there are three other reasons for this study: 1) Up until recently, there was limited empirical research on entrepreneurship in Morocco (Gray, Foster, and Howard 2006; Bouzekraoui and Ferhane, 2017; Naguib, 2022); 2) Morocco has strong economic ties to wealthier countries in the European Union; and 3) Morocco has expanded considerably its trade with other countries following the 1996 partnership with the European Union : by 2022, free trade (FTAs) and preferential trade agreements had been signed with 62 countries in total, including the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. Negotiations for FTAs are ongoing with the EU, Canada, and the rest of Africa (ITA, 2022).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework supporting this research (figure 1) is based on the extant literature, more precisely from previous publications by Benzing, Chu, and Kara (2009), Chu, Benzing, et McGee (2007) as well as Kuratko, Hornsby, and Naffziger (1997). This framework emphasizes the three following dimensions, which are explained in detail in the literature review section below: entrepreneurial motivations, determinants of success, and barriers.

**FIGURE 1**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MOTIVATIONS, DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS AND BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



This article is divided into three main sections: the first part reviews the literature on the situation of entrepreneurship in Morocco, entrepreneurial motives, determinants of success and barriers; the second part describes the empirical study’s method, data analysis, and statistical results; the third and last section discusses the results obtained in light of previous findings, the limits of this research, its policy implications, as well as further research issues derived from these conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Entrepreneurship in Morocco

Morocco belongs to the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, with Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and Yemen. Although a majority of these countries are oil producers, there is a shift among both private and sovereign investors’ behavior in MENA away from fossil fuels towards consumer-oriented firms and services. As a result, MENA countries are diversifying (GIH, 2008; MENAPEA, 2015), and entrepreneurship forms a part of that solution. Moreover, political and economic turmoil in the region, the lack of jobs, fluctuating oil prices, and a growing desire for independence among young people, self-employment has gained significant importance in recent years. This trend has notably been observed by GEM (2020) in Morocco, as follows: 41.9 percent of Moroccans expressed a desire to start a business in the three following years; more than 62.4 percent of adults believe they have the skills and competencies to start a business, but 42.5 percent believe they are deterred by a fear of failure.

According to GEM (2020), Morocco has moved up 13 places to 24th in the ranking, among 50 countries representing over 84 percent of global GDP. The GEM study reveals an acceleration of entrepreneurial dynamics, driven more by the search for opportunity than by a reaction to an unsatisfactory labor market. In 2017, with an entrepreneurial activity index (EIA) of 6.8 percent, Morocco occupied a first quartile position in the group of efficiency-driven economies (GEM 2017). More recently, in 2019, the EIA for Morocco increased from 6.8 percent to 11.4 percent of the total labor force.

This dynamic has been attributed to the creation of new businesses, and the various advances made in the legislative framework around the entrepreneurial ecosystem. GEM (2020) reported that Morocco now gives priority to the integration of the informal economy and has introduced a “self-entrepreneur” status to that effect. However, GEM (2020) also reported that none of these new Moroccan companies introduced products or services either new to their area, new to their country or new to the world. They rather reproduce an activity with an existing technology in highly competitive sectors, a form of entrepreneurship that is not innovative and does not create many jobs. According to HCP (2019), the entrepreneurial dynamic is not shared by all regions of Morocco, with Southern areas being less entrepreneurial when compared to Northern regions such as Casablanca-Settat, which is the most entrepreneurial in Morocco (HCP 2019).

While a report from the World Bank (2017) claimed that most of the elements necessary for a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem exist in Morocco, some issues were noted, such as the lack of communication between key actors, i.e. the government and the private sector. This disconnect results in a growing but fragmented ecosystem lacking of sufficient support for entrepreneurial activities. According to this report, support for business start-ups exists but needs to be more strongly linked to the ecosystem, while the quality of infrastructures needs to be improved (power grid, roads and transportation). More recently, the 2020 GEM report provided a detailed analysis of the entrepreneurial framework conditions in Morocco. Morocco (through InnovInvest) has government-backed funds to support innovation and technology (GEM, 2020), as well as other market dynamics and commercial/ legal infrastructures more favorable than those of similar countries. Conversely, GEM observes the presence of a need for more business education in the school system as well as beyond schooling, more entrepreneurial financing must be available, as well as more favourable cultural and social norms towards entrepreneurship. As a result, there is still a low level of entrepreneurial activity among the youth, despite a high level of unemployment among that age group (GEM, 2020, p. 139).

### **Entrepreneurial Motivations**

Gartner, Bird, and Starr (1992) observed that occupational motivation theories used to explain organizational behavior came short of addressing the wide array of motivational situations surrounding the creation of organizations. Since then, the study of entrepreneurial motives has been related to theoretical models of entrepreneurial performance, intention, and action (Carsrud and Brannback, 2011; Morris, et al., 2006; Blawatt, 1995; Naffziger, et al. 1994; Herron and Robinson, 1993) which highlight the importance of the objectives pursued by entrepreneurs in the development of their enterprise. The attention paid by these researchers to the motivation variable is based on the premise that a better understanding of entrepreneurial motivations contributes to a better understanding of the behaviors displayed by entrepreneurs and the impact of these behaviors on firm performance.

It is generally agreed that there are two broad categories of factors that drive individuals to engage in entrepreneurial activity: 1) A group of “pull” factors, associating business creation with opportunities seized as a result of deliberate choices; 2) “push” factors, where business creation is the result of a decision forced by circumstances (Fayolle and Nakara, 2012; Fairlie, 1996). The pull group has been identified with the positive aspects of self-employment, presenting it as an attractive activity that is deliberately pursued (Fairlie and Meyer, 1991). This group of motives includes notably a desire for independence and autonomy, personal fulfillment and achievement, challenge and the opportunity to foster company growth leading to financial gain. The “push” group of motivations refers to negative events that force a person to start a business: in that case, self-employment is perceived as a last resort where the individual falls victim from an exclusion out of the labor market (Feldman, et al., 1991) or from the inability of a country’s economy to generate new jobs (Acs, et al., 2004). In such cases, the necessity to create a business may result from a wide, complex, variety of motives and circumstances (Tessier-Dargent and Fayolle, 2016; Rosa, Kodithuwakku, and Balunywa, 2006; Kodithuwakku and Rosa, 2002): chronic unemployment, below poverty wages in some sectors, minority discrimination (Serviere and Munoz, 2010; Light, 1979), redundancy, dissatisfaction in previous jobs, health problems, family financial difficulties, a need for flexibility due to greater family responsibilities, and the death of one or both parents who own a business (Chedli, 2016).

Furthermore, the literature points to a wide variety of motivations for entrepreneurs that can be both economic or non-economic. Economic motives include obtaining monetary compensation, growing wealth and business capital (Chell, 2000), generating additional income after retirement (Bell and Rutherford, 2013), acquiring personal wealth, increasing personal income and/or increasing earnings (Kuratko, et al., 1997). Non-economic reasons refer, for example, to seeking job security for oneself and one’s family (Aronoff and Ward, 1995), self-actualization, the opportunity to create something (Aspaas, 2004), independence and autonomy, control gained by being one’s own boss, personal growth, recognition, challenge, and satisfaction of a need to succeed (Kuratko, et al., 1997; Robichaud, McGraw, and Roger, 2001).

## Moroccan Entrepreneurs' Motives

Rosa, Kodithuwakku and Balunywa (2006) observed that most entrepreneurial motives such as moderate risk taking, a desire for autonomy, and other intrinsic motives remain behind a large number of firm start-ups in less developed or developing countries. In Africa, Frese and De Kruif, (2000) stated that most entrepreneurs start a firm for lack of work and are only motivated to earn enough to make a living. According to Le Cabellec (2017), Morocco's long-term economic growth depends in part on the country's ability to develop a fabric of SMEs capable of supporting the nascent industrialization phenomenon.

While the Covid-19 pandemic had adverse effects on the economy, Morocco's economic profile (GEM, 2020) described an upward trend, however, insufficient job creation does increase unemployment. In fact, economic growth was already decelerating before the pandemic, notably from 2018 to 2019. GEM (2020) also observed that a positive attitude is displayed by authorities about entrepreneurship, while young people still have a very limited involvement in creating new firms.

The MENA region is known to have the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, with about one-third of youth unemployed. As a result, young people in the region are more interested in starting their own business than in employment. A February 2014, *Millennials in MENA* survey across 14 countries (Bayt, 2014) found that: a) financial stability and independence were top priorities for 78 percent of respondents; b) 66 percent wanted to learn and explore new things, and 57 percent wanted to spend more time with their families.

Gray, Foster, and Howard (2006) interviewed 201 Moroccan entrepreneurs, primarily from Casablanca, from various sectors. Two-thirds of the respondents were attracted (pull factors) to entrepreneurship while the remainder had been constrained to become self-employed by a wide array of circumstances. Both psychological and situational factors seemed combined. In terms of personal characteristics, Moroccan entrepreneurs had a high desire for achievement, resulting from their strong inclination to solve problems, to achieve the goals they have set for themselves, and to outperform their competitors. These entrepreneurs were also motivated by a high need for independence, hence the expressed desire to be their own bosses and also to create a better life for themselves and their family members through financial independence. However, with the exception of a few young people, these entrepreneurs were reluctant to change and to innovate. Many of the respondents had inherited family businesses or had entered existing industries with undifferentiated product or service offerings.

With respect to external factors, several features of the economic environment motivated Moroccan entrepreneurs, including the desire to improve their income, to create jobs, the encouragement of foreign trade, and an increased competition for existing jobs. A majority of respondents were attracted to entrepreneurship by positive elements in the environment, such as having new ideas and identifying opportunities based on past experiences of their own. Among the motives mentioned were to start a company recognized by society, to build their own dynasty and to contribute to the development of the national economy.

Conversely, Moroccan respondents who were forced into an entrepreneurial career were either dissatisfied with their previous work experience, wanted to try something else, or wanted to prove to society that they could accomplish things on their own. Results from Gray, Foster, and Howard's (2006) study were corroborated by more recent qualitative and quantitative research (Boussetta, 2011; Bouzekraoui and Ferhane, 2017; Naguib, 2022). Surveying Moroccan engineers, Yatribi and Balhadj (2016) found job dissatisfaction to be the primary reason for voluntary departures to become self-employed. This dissatisfaction was mainly stemming from an under-utilization of skills causing engineers to feel devalued and lacking in esteem and, secondly, problems associated with an autocratic managerial environment that stifles any desire to participate in decision-making, innovation or optimization of work methods and processes. Job dissatisfaction was exacerbated by other habits considered to be outdated, such as favoritism, disrespect for people, career capping and even the excuse of religion as a justification for refusing change. Yatribi and Balhadj's (2016) study highlighted seven motivating factors that prompt entrepreneurship, the most important of which being intrinsic motives such as the quest for autonomy, driven by the desire for independence and self-fulfillment. Naguib (2022) as well as Boussetta (2011) also found a combination of

intrinsic and extrinsic factors among a sample of female Moroccan entrepreneurs, with a dominance of economic motives.

The presence of entrepreneurs in the individual's entourage provides situational role models that encourage Moroccans to start a business, as shown in the study by Gray, Foster and Howard (2006) where more than half of the respondents came from families where one of the parents acted as a role model for self-employment. Other respondents followed the example of other family members or friends, while less than 30% of respondents reported having no role model. The person identified as a role model instills in the potential entrepreneur the aspiration to follow the same career path and will serve as a mentor during start-up and beyond. Many entrepreneurs acknowledge that some of their friends and colleagues had successfully started their own businesses and that hanging out with these people motivated them to follow the same path (Yatribi and Balhadj, 2016). Naguib (2022) as well as others (Bouzekraoui and Ferhane, 2017; Siba, 2019) have emphasized the importance of social support from family and social networks, as well as entrepreneurial education, access to professional qualifications, access to funding, and breaking cultural and social barriers.

To conclude, the literature on entrepreneurial motivations suggests that entrepreneurs operating in emerging countries or in less economically well-off countries would be more motivated by economic (extrinsic) goals, while entrepreneurs from regions with more favorable economic conditions such as North America and Europe would place more importance on intrinsic motivations (GEM, 2020). On this basis, we will postulate that entrepreneurs in Morocco, an emerging country, will be more motivated by economic goals.

### **Entrepreneurial Success and Performance**

A review of the literature on the variables that contribute to small business success requires a definition of what is meant by business success. Scholars have considered several concepts characterizing business success, including productivity, performance and growth in terms of staff, sales, profits, and other dimensions, as well as excellence and even survival in the case of start-ups. Theoretical models have been developed to identify the variables most likely to explain the success of a firm. Examples include models by Morris, et al. (2006), Blawatt (1995), Naffziger, et al. (1994), Box, et al. (1993), Herron and Robinson (1993), Keats and Bracker (1988) and Cragg and King (1988). One finding that emerges from the study of these theoretical models is the importance given to personal characteristics and contextual variables, including the personal or immediate environment and the external environment in the study of performance.

#### *Personal and Psychological Characteristics*

Personal characteristics include mainly demographic, sociological, psychological (including motivations) and entrepreneurial skills. Demographic variables can be summarized as age, education, experience, family background, marital status, family rank and gender. Although demographic variables have a definite influence on an individual's decision to start his or her own business (Naffziger, et al., 1994), entrepreneurship researchers agree that these variables alone do not explain the entrepreneurial phenomenon (Greenberger and Sexton, 1988). Studies by Brush and Hisrich (1991) and Buttner and Moore (1997) are examples of research that fall into this category. They also reported a positive significant relationship between business experience and company performance. Similar observations have been made in developing countries such as Indonesia (Suminah, et al., 2022), or comparing various countries (Brieger, et al., 2021), including Morocco, at different entrepreneurial life stages.

Psychological characteristics are the personality traits (attitudes and values) generally associated with being an entrepreneur. These traits, which are acquired through life experiences (education, experience, family background, and the socialization process as a whole), determine the behavioral intentions of individuals. Unlike demographic characteristics, which do not require measurement, psychological characteristics must be measured using a validated measurement instrument. Specialists agree on the relevance of certain personality traits in the entrepreneurial phenomenon. Among those most often cited are the following groupings: creativity and innovation, need for independence and autonomy, need for accomplishment, tendency to take moderate risks and an internal locus of control, i.e. a feeling of being

able to influence one's own future, by opposition to feeling dependent on fate or other people's decisions. For example, in a study by Frese, et al. (2002), independence, autonomy, creativity, innovation and moderate risk-taking tendency were linked to business success.

#### *Business Learning, Experience and Socio-Economic Contexts*

As a mix of knowledge, skills and abilities, competence differs from demographic and psychological variables because it can be upgraded by the individual. As a highly dynamic variable in nature, management competence received most of the attention of entrepreneurship researchers in the early 1990s when scholars such as Gartner (1989) recommended abandoning the focus on psychological determinants. McCormick and Tiffin (1974) define competence as a psychological construct that, unlike behavior, is inferred and explains behavioral effectiveness. Competence represents what the individual is capable of doing and indicates an ability to learn and perform tasks. According to Pettersen and Jacob (1992), competence consists of skills (which are used to learn new abilities), abilities (abilities learned through training or experience to perform job tasks or functions at a given job), and knowledge (specific abilities based on the possession of relevant information). Research on competence includes Penrose (1959) on managerial ability, innovation and competitive advantage, Gibb and Davies (1990) on network ability, and Gibb and Scott (1985) on technical skills.

As for the entrepreneur's immediate environment, it corresponds to the context in which the person evolves (for example, her family responsibilities, the influence of her spouse, or the location of the business), while the external environment addresses aspects of competitiveness, industry structure, technology, business networks and financing (Cooper, 1993). In this regard, research confirms both the critical importance of spousal/family involvement and moral support (Nikina, Shelton and Le Loarne, 2015; Ferguson and Durup, 1997), as well as the critical role of the entrepreneur's involvement in business and community networks to business success (Watson, 2012).

#### *Entrepreneurial Dynamics in Emerging Economies*

This study considers dynamic success variables that are more likely to improve over time, including the entrepreneur's competencies, and the context in which entrepreneurial behaviors occur (immediate and external environments). For example, entrepreneurial competencies improve by acquiring new skills and knowledge, while contextual factors such as government support or access to financing may also be altered by stakeholders such as governments or financial institutions.

There is a significant body of scholarship about entrepreneurial success in both developed and emerging countries by Benzing, et al., (2009, 2005a, 2005b), Robichaud, et al., (2010), Chu, et al., (2008) and Stefanovic, et al., (2013). In a survey performed in Turkey by Benzing, et al., (2009), the following success variables emerged as the most important: «reputation for honesty», «charisma: friendliness to customers», «networking» and «good customer service». A similar study in Vietnam (Benzing, et al., 2005a) reported «reputation for honesty» as most important, followed in second by «charisma» and by «good customer service» as well as «good product at a competitive price» as third and fourth choices. In a different order, the same results were obtained in Romania (Benzing, et al., 2005b). In the Robichaud, et al., (2010) study, the most prominent success statements were «reputation for honesty», «good customer service», «hard work» and «charisma: friendliness to customers». Nigerian entrepreneurs (Chu, et al., 2008) chose as the main determinants of success «hard work» first, followed by «good general management skills» and, in third and fourth place, «good customer service» and «charisma: friendliness to customers». Finally, in Serbia, Stefanovic, et al., (2013) identified the four following success variables: «good customer service», «good product at a competitive price», «reputation for honesty» and «good general management skills».

**TABLE 1**  
**RESEARCH ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS**

Variables	Benzing, et al., (2009) Turkey	Benzing, et al., (2005a) Vietnam	Benzing, et al., (2005b) Romania	Robichaud, et al., (2010) Canada	Chu, et al., (2008) Nigeria	Stefanovic, et al. (2013) Serbia
Good general management skills					2	4
Charisma: friendliness to customers	2	2	1	4	4	
Good product at a competitive price		4	4			2
Good customer service	4	3	2	2	3	1
Hard work				3	1	
Reputation for honesty	1	1	3	1		3
Community involvement and networking	3					

Table 1 summarizes the rankings of the most cited success variables across various countries. In light of these results, the success factors that seem to stand out the most are “charisma”, “honesty”, “good customer service” followed in fourth place by “good product/service at a competitive price”. It will be interesting to see if the same determinants of success emerge from this survey.

### **Entrepreneurial Barriers**

Another important dimension of entrepreneurship research focuses on the barriers or constraints threatening entrepreneurs (Yalcin and Kapu, 2008). Storey (1994) defines barriers as internal or external factors hindering business growth. According to Benzing, et al., (2009), the problems faced by entrepreneurs in both emerging and developing countries are often similar. Yet, emerging countries’ entrepreneurs face highly unstable and unpredictable environments characterized by a high level of government bureaucracy. In such contexts, legislations governing the private sector, notably the business start-up process and the taxation system are very complex and difficult to navigate. Other studies (Benzing, et al., 2005a; Chu, et al., 2008) note that these countries also face problems of economic weakness, access to short and long-term financing, increased competition, and a lack of skilled personnel to rely on.

In general, Moroccan companies face similar issues as those mentioned above. According to the World Economic Forum (2017), the main barriers to starting a business in Morocco are, in descending order of importance, access to finance, inadequate workforce training, government bureaucracy, tax rates, insufficient innovation capacity, corruption, tax regulations, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of work ethic of the local workforce. Nziku and Struthers (2018) also stressed the importance of addressing



obstacles to female entrepreneurship through capacity building activities such as mentoring and training. These observations were more recently reiterated in a report by the OMTPE (2022, p. 120).

## **METHOD**

### **Defining the SME**

The extant literature indicates an absence of a universal definition of a small and medium-sized business (SME). For this research, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) definition was adopted, i.e. a firm with less than 250 employees.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

Data were obtained from Chambers of commerce located in Morocco. Within the city of Fez, questionnaires were administered directly with business owners. Senior Master student interns from l'École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion de Fez (ENCG-Fez) were responsible for the actual contacts with business owners. These students came from the following streams: accounting and financial management, auditing and control, marketing, and international business. Each 3 to 6-month intern had committed to interview one to three people in person within a given company, according to the number of owners. A total of 110 students were involved, and were rewarded by getting a 1 to 2 points increase to their course evaluation. Once completed, each questionnaire had to be duly stamped by the respondent with the company's seal, in order to confirm the authenticity of the data submitted by respondents through the students.

### **Morocco – The Fez-Meknès Area**

According to the HCP (2018), the Fez-Meknès region had a population of 4.4 million in 2020. Saad Alami (2016) reports that 61 percent of firms in the region were located in Fez and that the region's industries accounted for 6 percent of Morocco's GDP and 2.4 percent of exports. Food processing, textiles and leather accounted for 60 percent of regional production. The region of Fez-Meknès contributed 9.3 percent to GDP in 2017, the 4th position at the national level.

With a population of just over 1.1 million, the city of Fez is Morocco's second largest city, located 180 km east of Rabat, the capital, between the Rif and the Middle Atlas Mountains. Being home to the oldest university in the world (Al Quaraouiyine University), founded in the 9th century, Fez is recognized as the cultural and spiritual capital of Morocco. It also comprises two other universities (Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University and the Euro-Mediterranean University).

Economically, Fez is focusing on tourism, with a growing hospitality sector, and a reputation for skilled handicraft entrepreneurs. Located in the rich Saïs plain, Fez has an important agri-food industry. Since 2016, the creation of Fez Shore, a park dedicated to IT services and data processing activities based on a rich pool of digital talent, aims to create employment in the knowledge economy by attracting firms specialized in offshoring. The Fez region had 25 call centers in 2016 (Saad Alami, 2016).

### **Variables Measurement**

Data measuring entrepreneurial success and barriers were collected by way of a questionnaire developed by Chu and Katsioloudes, 2001. This instrument has been used in many studies around the world, including in Romania, Vietnam, India, Venezuela, Canada, Mexico, and several African countries. The survey instrument for measuring entrepreneurial success is formed of 17 statements, while the one for measuring entrepreneurial barriers includes 16 items, with both questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale. The instrument measuring entrepreneurs' motivations was developed by Robichaud, McGraw and Roger (2001) and comprises 18 variables measured with a five-point Likert scale. This scale has been used in numerous studies in France, Russia, Spain, Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

For both the Motivation scale and the Success scale, an answer of 5 would rate the variable as «extremely important», a 4 «very important», a 3 «mildly important», a 2 «not very important», while a 1

would rate it as «unimportant». For the Barriers scale, an answer of 5 rates the variable as «very serious», a 4 «serious», a 3 «mildly serious», a 2 «minor», and a 1 would rate it as «not serious».

### Data Analysis

Data were statistically processed using SPSS software via the following analyses and statistical tests: principal component analysis, commonly called factor analysis (with orthogonal rotation in varimax mode); univariate statistical analysis (descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation).

## RESULTS

### Respondents' Profile

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of respondents according to their personal and business characteristics. In terms of age, entrepreneurs were over 30, with 57 percent between 30 and 49 years of age, and 37 percent within the 50-years plus age category. While 84 percent of them had a postsecondary education, they had a limited management experience (51 percent with five years of experience or less), as well as a limited experience in their sector (62 percent with five years or less experience). Most respondents were male (94 percent), which is disproportionate in comparison to the 14.2 percent of female entrepreneurs recorded by OMTPE (2022, p. 119) for the Fez-Meknès region. 86 percent of the respondents reported living with a spouse. 54 percent of them had started their business out of financial necessity, and 58 percent of them reported working over 40 hours per week.

In terms of organizational characteristics, respondents' businesses were more concentrated in the retail and service sectors (84 percent of the businesses being in these two categories), they had mostly been created by their owner (79 percent), and they are considered by their owners to be very profitable (58 percent). Secondly, entrepreneurs tend to operate alone (43 percent of them said they operate alone), they evaluate their level of debt as being important or very important (72 percent) and the age of the companies is well distributed among the four categories (54 percent of the companies are less than 10 years old). Finally, 47 percent of the businesses have 5 or fewer employees.

**TABLE 2**  
**RESPONDENTS' PROFILES (N=245)**

<b>Personal and organizational characteristics</b>			
<b>Personal characteristics</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Organizational characteristics</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		<b>Business success</b>	
20 to 29 years	6	None/minor profitability	1
30 to 49 years	57	Average profitability	41
50 +	37	Highly profitable	58
<b>Education</b>		<b>Number of employees</b>	
High school	16	1 - 5 employees	47
Postsecondary/ university degree	84	6 - 10 employees	21
		11 employees and +	32
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Industry/ Economic sector</b>	
Male	94	Retail	38
Female	6	Services	46
		Manufacturing	16

<b>Personal and organizational characteristics</b>			
<b>Personal characteristics</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Organizational characteristics</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Family status and reason for start-up</b>		<b>Firm start-up</b>	
Married or common law	86	Creation by owner	79
Spouse involved in business	14	Acquisition	5
Business started due to economic necessity	54	Inheritance or franchise	16
<b>Previous experience in current sector</b>		<b>Age of the firm</b>	
None	18	1 - 5 years	26
1 - 5 years	44	6 - 10 years	28
6 - 10 years	24	11 – 20 years	22
11 years +	14	21 years +	24
<b>Previous management experience</b>		<b>Number of co-owners /partners</b>	
None	15	1 (sole proprietorship)	43
1 - 5 years	36	2	29
6 - 10 years	28	3 +	28
11 years +	21		
<b>Weekly hours worked</b>		<b>Debt level perception</b>	
0 - 20 hours	6	Unimportant or not very important	28
21 - 40 hours	36	Moderately important	45
41 - 55 hours	45	Very or extremely important	27
56 hours +	13		

### **Motivation Scale**

Table 3 presents mean scores for each of the 18 statements composing the motivation scale for Moroccan entrepreneurs. The statement «To increase sales and profits» ranked first with a mean score of 4.21. The second ranking item «To acquire a comfortable living», had a mean score equal to 4.10, while motives «To be my own boss» and «To create my own job» obtained third and fourth ranks with means equal to 4.08 and 4.07 respectively, followed by the item «To maximize business growth» (mean score 4.05). The lowest ranking items were, in order: «To provide jobs for family members» and «To meet the challenge» with mean scores equal to 3.31 and 3.37. This suggests that extrinsic motives were most favoured by Moroccan entrepreneurs, as four of the five most favoured choices were economically focused.

**TABLE 3**  
**MOTIVATION SCALE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS**

Motivation scale variables (n = 18)	Mean scores	Standard deviation
To increase sales and profits	4.21	.869
To acquire a comfortable living	4.10	1.009
To be my own boss	4.08	.903
To create my own job	4.07	.889
To maximize business growth	4.05	.940
To maintain my personal freedom	4.03	.956
So I will always have job security	3.89	.973
To have fun	3.87	1.045
To make my own decisions	3.85	1.003
To build a business to pass on	3.80	1.009
To build up equity for retirement	3.77	.926
To increase my income	3.74	1.028
To prove I can succeed	3.72	1.034
For my own satisfaction and growth	3.69	.945
To gain public recognition	3.50	1.038
To be closer to my family	3.46	1.081
To meet the challenge	3.37	1.001
To provide jobs for family members	3.31	1.152

A factor analysis (principal component analysis in varimax mode) of respondents' motives was performed in order to determine motivational factors. Factor retention was based on the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > or = to 1). The criterion to retain statements was a minimum value of 0.50 for communalities between variables and factorial weights. As a result, the following items were removed from the model: «To have fun», «To make my own decisions», «To increase sales and profits», «To increase my income», «To maintain my personal freedom» and «To gain public recognition». The main results from table 4 are summarized below:

- The factor analysis produced four motivation factors: Job security (three statements), extrinsic motives (three statements), intrinsic motives (two statements), family motives (four statements).
- For each factor scale, eigenvalues and proportions of explained variance were similar, from 15 percent to 19 percent. Total explained variance equaled 65.8 percent.
- The internal consistency of the four scales, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, varied from 0.66 to 0.75, signaling a strong internal consistency given the number of statements composing each

scale. On this subject, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) mention that for an instrument composed of small scales of three to four statements, an alpha coefficient of about 0.70 or more is considered satisfactory and indicates that the scales seem to measure the same construct.

The use of principal component analysis allows a set of variables to be reduced to a few more general dimensions, thus providing an overall picture of the factors instead of an individual consideration. Thus, the eigenvalues obtained for each factor indicate the importance of each factor in explaining the variance associated with these variables. For example, in our study, the “family” factor explains a larger proportion of the total explained variance (19 percent), followed by the “job security” factor with 15.82 percent and by the “extrinsic motivations” and “intrinsic motivations” factors with 15.51 percent and 15.59 percent respectively.

It is important to understand that results from the factor analysis do not identify which factors are most important to the respondents. For example, although the “family” factor ranks first in the percentage of variance explained in the factor analysis with 19 percent (Table 4), Table 5 shows that it ranks third in the importance attributed to the factors by the respondents in the sample with a cumulative average of 3.56. In our case, the “job security” factor was the most important for the respondents with a cumulative average of 4.01 followed by the “extrinsic motivations” factor with an average of 3.97 and the “intrinsic motivations” factor (3.54).

A comparison of the cumulative means of the four motivational factor scales (Table 5) reveals almost identical scores for the “job security” and “extrinsic motivations” factors (4.01 versus 3.97) and between “family” and “intrinsic motivations” (3.56 versus 3.54). “Job security” and “extrinsic motivations” were therefore the most important choices for respondents.

**TABLE 4**  
**FACTOR ANALYSIS – ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATIONS**

Statements	Family motives	Job security	Extrinsic motives	Intrinsic motives	Communalities
To provide jobs for family members	0.832				. 723
For my own satisfaction and growth	0.516				. 603
To build a business to pass on	0.779				. 716
To be closer to my family	0.694				. 584
To create my own job		0.728			. 633
To be my own boss		0.808			. 679
So I will always have job security		0.583			. 556
To acquire a comfortable living			0.754		. 671

Statements	Family motives	Job security	Extrinsic motives	Intrinsic motives	Communalities
To build up equity for retirement			0.798		.658
To maximize business growth			0.605		.554
To meet the challenge				0.804	.733
To prove I can succeed				0.842	.791
Eigenvalues	2.280	1.898	1.862	1.860	
Explained variance %	19.00	15.82	15.51	15.49	
Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha)	.75	.70	.69	.66	

**TABLE 5**  
**CUMULATIVE MEAN SCORES – MOTIVATION FACTORS**

Factors	Mean factor scores*	Standard deviations
Job security	4.01	.72305
Extrinsic motives	3.97	.69467
Family motives	3.56	.79798
Intrinsic motives	3.54	.88122

\*Mean factor scores were computed by calculating the mean scores for all variables composing each factor. For example, the resulting mean factor score for 'Family motives' equals the mean of all four variables forming this factor (see table 4).

### **Determinants of Success Scale**

Table 6 presents mean scores for each of the 17 statements composing the determinants of success scale for Moroccan entrepreneurs. The highest rated success determinant among respondents is «reputation for honesty», with a mean score of 4.12, followed in second by «good customer service», and in third place by «charisma – friendliness to customers» with mean scores, respectively equal to 4.11 and 4.10. In fourth place, the statement «good product/service at a competitive price» obtains a score of 3.92. The success determinants deemed as least important were both rated with mean scores below 3.0. these were «Satisfactory government support» and «political involvement», with respective ratings of 2.92 and 2.61. This suggests that, in general, entrepreneurs within this sample were not expecting support from government or from the body politic.

**TABLE 6**  
**DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS SCALE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS**

Success scale variables (n = 17)	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Reputation for honesty	4.12	1.005
Good customer service	4.11	.878
Charisma; friendliness to customers	4.10	.938
Good product/service at a competitive price	3.92	.916
Ability to manage personnel	3.84	.899
Maintenance of accurate records of sales/expenses	3.72	.929
Previous business experience	3.65	.920
Location	3.63	.938
Good general management skills	3.59	1.029
Access to capital	3.53	.979
Community involvement and networking	3.52	1.082
Hard work	3.50	1.031
Marketing factors such as sales promotion	3.50	1.025
Support of family and friends	3.48	1.072
Appropriate training	3.33	1.154
Satisfactory government support	2.92	1.052
Political involvement	2.61	1.362

A factor analysis (principal component analysis in varimax mode) of respondents' determinants of success was performed in order to determine success factors. Factor retention was based on the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue  $>$  or  $=$  to 1). The criterion to retain statements was a minimum value of 0.50 for communalities between variables and factorial weights. As a result, the following items were removed from the model: 'Appropriate training', 'Maintenance of accurate records of sales/expenses', and 'Support of family and friends'.

Table 7 presents the four factors resulting from the factor analysis of entrepreneurial determinants of success. Factor 1 corresponds to Personal characteristics and includes six statements; both Factor 2, Business support, and Factor 3, Sales characteristics include three statements, while Factor 4, Immediate environment, only includes two statements. The Personal characteristics factor explained the highest proportion of the total variance (19.4 percent, with an eigenvalue of 2.7), followed by the Business support factor (13.1 percent of the total variance and an eigenvalue of 1.8). The remaining two factors, Sales characteristics and Immediate environment, explained respectively 12.9 percent and 10.4 percent of the explained variance, with eigenvalues of 1.8 and 1.4. Overall, the total explained variance was equal to 55.9 percent.

A strong internal consistency among the four scales was evidenced by Cronbach’s alphas equal to 0.52 to 0.73. This takes into account the limited number of statements composing each scale.

**TABLE 7**  
**FACTOR ANALYSIS – ENTREPRENEURIAL DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS**

Statements	Factor 1 Personal characteristics	Factor 2 Business support	Factor 3 Sales characteristics	Factor 4 Immediate Environnement	Communalities
Good general management skills	0.500				.467
Previous business experience	0.701				.525
Good customer service	0.605				.532
Ability to manage personnel	0.597				.449
Community involvement and networking	0.651				.616
Reputation for honesty	0.521				.441
Satisfactory government support		0.708			.553
Access to capital		0.568			.473
Political involvement		0.733			.676
Charisma; friendliness to customers			0.507		.545
Good product at a competitive price			0.826		.734
Marketing factors			0.623		.637
Location				0.642	.542
Hard work				0.804	.662
Eigenvalues	2.720	1.842	1.813	1.455	
Explained variance %	19.42	13.15	12.95	10.39	
Internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha)	.73	.55	.62	.52	

Success factors’ cumulative mean scores are presented in table 8, revealing the relative importance of each factor as indicated by respondents’ cumulative scores. With a mean score of 3.84, the ‘Sales characteristics’ factor came slightly ahead, followed by the ‘Personal characteristics’ factor with a mean



score of 3.80. The third and fourth Success factors were ‘Immediate environment’ with a score of 3.56, followed by ‘Business support’, with a mean score of 3.01.

**TABLE 8**  
**CUMULATIVE MEANS – SUCCESS FACTORS**

Factors	Mean factor scores*	Standard deviations
Sales characteristics	3.84	.718
Personal characteristics	3.80	.628
Immediate environment	3.56	.798
Business support	3.01	.825

\*Mean factor scores were computed by calculating the mean scores for all variables composing each factor. For example, the resulting mean factor score for ‘Business support’ equals the mean of all four variables forming this factor (see table 7).

### Barriers Scale

Results from the barrier scale are presented on table 9 by variable sample mean score and standard deviation. Two variables came ahead of the others, «Unreliable and undependable employees» and «too much competition», followed by «weak economy» and «inability to maintain accurate accounting records». It is noteworthy to observe the small difference in scores between the third choice and the tenth choice, of only twelve hundredths (i.e. respectively 3.39 for ‘weak economy’, and 3.27 for ‘too much government regulation/bureaucracy’). In other words, respondents saw the complexity of the fiscal system, financing issues, management and marketing training issues, and administrative burden, as a nebula of important obstacles to their activities as business owners.

**TABLE 9**  
**BARRIER SCALE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS**

Barrier scale variables (n = 16)	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Unreliable and undependable employees	3.66	1.050
Too much competition	3.65	.875
Weak economy	3.39	1.061
Inability to maintain accurate accounting records	3.38	1.068
Complex fiscal system	3.37	1.078
Obtaining short-term financing	3.35	.990
Obtaining long-term financing	3.34	1.047
Lack of marketing training	3.29	1.120
Lack of management training	3.28	1.149
Too much government regulation/bureaucracy	3.27	1.051

Barrier scale variables (n = 16)	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Unsafe location	3.24	1.018
Limited parking	3.17	1.087
Complex business registration process	3.02	1.203
Electricity problems	3.00	1.351
Limited export opportunities	2.99	1.294
Poor roads/transportation	2.97	1.246

A principal component analysis was performed in order to determine entrepreneurial barrier factors. Table 10 presents the four resulting groupings: Factor 1 represents Infrastructure and government issues such as the fiscal system, safety concerns, quality of roads, access to electricity, business registration issues and exporting issues (6 statements); Factor 2 mainly deals with Government bureaucracy and lack of training in management and marketing (4 statements); Factor 3 focuses on a Lack of access to financing (2 statements), while the fourth factor describes aspects of the External and personal environment of the entrepreneur, such as a weak economy, a fierce competition, and staffing issues (3 statements).

The Infrastructure and government issues factor came first, explaining almost twenty percent of the total variance (19.6 percent, with an eigenvalue of 2.9), followed by the factor about Bureaucracy and lack of training (14.8 percent of explained variance, with an eigenvalue of 2.2), the Lack of access to financing factor (13.0 percent of explained variance and an eigenvalue of 1.9), and the External and personal environment factor (12 percent of explained variance, eigenvalue 1.8). For the whole model, the total explained variance was 59.4 percent. With Cronbach's alphas equal to 0.52 to 0.82, the four scales had a strong internal consistency, given the limited number of statements composing each scale.

**TABLE 10**  
**FACTOR ANALYSIS – ENTREPRENEURIAL BARRIERS**

Statements	Infrastructure and government issues	Bureaucracy and lack of training	Lack of access to financing	External and personal environment	Variables communalities
Complex fiscal system	0.589				.587
Unsafe location	0.717				.590
Complex business registration process	0.673				.533
Limited export opportunities	0.716				.703
Poor roads/transportation	0.617				.573
Electricity problems	0.564				.506
Too much government regulation/bureaucracy		0.526			.484

Statements	Infrastructure and government issues	Bureaucracy and lack of training	Lack of access to financing	External and personal environment	Variables communalities
Limited parking		0.555			.491
Lack of marketing training		0.771			.753
Lack of management training		0.846			.668
Obtaining short-term financing			0.801		.679
Obtaining long-term financing			0.810		.707
Unreliable and undependable employees				.639	.554
Too much competition				.748	.610
Weak economy				.519	.471
Eigenvalues	2.936	2.226	1.945	1.803	
Explained variance %	19.57	14.84	12.96	12.01	
Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha)	.82	.70	.67	.52	

Barrier factors' cumulative scores appear on table 11. Respondents scored the "External and personal environment" factor on top with an average of 3.56. The other factors are, in order, "Lack of access to financing", "Bureaucracy and lack of training" and "Infrastructure and government issues" with cumulative averages of 3.35, 3.25 and 3.19 respectively. This result indicates that, for this sample of Moroccan entrepreneurs, the main obstacles forming their External and personal environment are a strong competition, a weak economy, and a lack of reliable personnel.

**TABLE 11**  
**CUMULATIVE MEANS - BARRIER FACTORS**

Factors	Mean factor scores*	Standard deviations
External and personal environment	3.56	.702
Lack of access to financing	3.35	.883
Bureaucracy and lack of training	3.25	.799
Infrastructure and government issues	3.19	.882

\*Mean factor scores were computed by calculating the mean scores for all variables composing each factor.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to gain a better understanding of entrepreneurship in Morocco through the study of motivations, determinants of success, and constraints/obstacles. To this end, entrepreneurial motives, success variables, and barriers facing Moroccan entrepreneurs were investigated with formerly validated scales in order to highlight the most important ones. Factor analyses were also performed in order to group those three categories of variables into more limited groupings.

### Entrepreneurial Motives

The analysis of the results reveals that entrepreneurs in Morocco are primarily motivated by extrinsic goals in that four of their top five motivation choices are economic. This result can be explained, in part, by the fact that more than half of the entrepreneurs in the sample (54 percent) started their business out of necessity. The results of this study show that entrepreneurs in Morocco share motives with their counterparts in Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria, as well as Venezuela, Romania, Turkey, and Serbia, where extrinsic motivations (including job security objectives) are predominant.

Furthermore, the final results of the factor analysis suggest four factors: extrinsic motivations, intrinsic motivations, family, and job security. This grouping differs from the four factors obtained in the studies by Robichaud, McGraw and Roger (2001) and Kuratko, et al. (1997) in that the “job security” factor, which includes the following three statements: “being my own boss”, “creating my own job” and “obtaining personal security by guaranteeing myself a job”, replaces, in our study, the “independence and autonomy” factor obtained in the studies by Robichaud and Kuratko. The result of the factor analysis is also consistent with results obtained in Turkey and Serbia (Stefanovic, Sloboda, and Rankovic, 2014) where the same four factors were obtained. Moreover, the factor related to job security seems to be very important in the eyes of Moroccan entrepreneurs since it comes first when the cumulative average of the importance of the factors is calculated. In this regard, the factor “job security” and the factor “extrinsic motivations” come respectively in first and second place in the calculation of cumulative averages with averages of 4.01 and 3.97. These scores are far ahead of the factors “family” and “intrinsic motivations”, which supports the results previously mentioned in the motivational statements. This result is also identical to findings by Benzing, et al. (2009) in Turkey.

In conclusion, our results confirm previous research on entrepreneurial motivations in emerging countries, where entrepreneurs are mainly motivated by economic goals, and become self-employed mainly out of necessity. However, in a recent study among a sample of 26 female entrepreneurs from the service sector, Naguib (2022) confirmed a previous observation by El Ouazzani (2018, 46), whereby, in Morocco, opportunity entrepreneurship dominates in the service sector. Naguib (2022), through in-depth interviews with her respondents, discovered that women had deliberately chosen to become self-employed in that sector due to the lower level of start-up capital necessary. In addition, this strategy allowed them to cope with their family and community gendered roles, while becoming financially more independent.

### Determinants of Success

This research revealed many similarities in the determinants of success favored by Moroccan respondents compared to previous research. Indeed, the top four choices identified, “honesty,” “providing good customer service,” “charisma or being friendly with customers,” and “good product at a competitive price” were also among the top choices mentioned in the literature (see Table 1). Moreover, the studies by Benzing, et al, (2005a, 2005b) obtained the same choices but in a different order.

At the same time, the least popular success variable obtained in the Benzing, Chu, and Kara (2009) study was “satisfactory government support” which is the same variable cited by respondents in our study along with the “politically involved” variable. These results suggest that there is some consistency or consensus among SME entrepreneur-owners in selecting the most important success variables regardless of cultural and religious differences.

Factor analyses yielded four groupings in terms of success variables: “Personal characteristics”, “Business support”, “Sales characteristics”, and “Immediate environment”. These four factors reflect those

present in the theoretical models mentioned in the literature review. “Personal characteristics” encompass management experience and competence as well as the ability to manage staff and provide a high level of customer service, enhanced by strong networking and an excellent personal image (reputation for honesty). The “Business support” factor emphasizes the importance of access to long-term capital funding, as well as the critical role for governments and political actors in providing satisfactory support to entrepreneurs. Sales characteristics describe the crucial mix of marketing skills combined to the offer of quality products and services at competitive prices, while demonstrating friendliness and gaining charisma among the clientele. The fourth grouping, Immediate environment, emphasizes two critical business success variables, hard work on the part of the entrepreneur, and business location.

Comparing the cumulative mean factor scores attributed by respondents, we find that both sales and personal characteristics are perceived as being prominent as determinants of business success in their opinion. In other words, they see the product-market couple as crucial, combined with management skill and experience, networking and a charismatic image for honesty and superior service, as the key success factors for an entrepreneur. Conversely, variables related to the role of government and the immediate environment were viewed as also important, but to a lesser degree, i.e. most likely necessary, but not sufficient to run a business successfully. In a recent study, Bouzekraoui and Ferhane (2017) stressed the importance of networking as a key success factor for women entrepreneurs in Morocco.

These results underscore the importance for organizations involved in training, supporting and advising future and current entrepreneurs to emphasize the determinants of success highlighted above. This conclusion being expressed with the caution that our sample is limited to a single urban region of Morocco.

### **Entrepreneurial Barriers**

As was the case with determinants of success, results regarding entrepreneurial barriers have been very similar to previous research. “Unreliable and undependable employees” and “Too much competition” with mean scores of, respectively, 3.66 and 3.65, were identified as prominent barriers by our sample. Attracting qualified, reliable staff, appears to be a recurrent problem across countries, as it was mentioned in first or second rank among barriers in Romania, Turkey, Nigeria, Kenya, Vietnam, China, and Serbia. In other studies, this issue was also mentioned as important within several of these countries as well (Nigeria, Venezuela, Kenya, China, and Vietnam).

In this regard, a document published by the World Bank (2017) mentioned that the inadequate training of the Moroccan workforce as well as its lack of work ethic are problems faced by Moroccan entrepreneurs. This absence of adequate workforce training in Morocco prevents most businesses from reaching their full potential. Although entrepreneurs are generally technically highly skilled, they generally lack the business knowledge needed to take their concepts and technologies beyond the ideation and early conceptualization stages. The scarcity of mentors also contributes to limiting entrepreneurial growth. Indeed, it is difficult in Morocco to find experienced business people able or willing to guide younger entrepreneurs through all phases of the growth cycle. Due to the lack of a culture of “giving back” in the ecosystem or community, many experienced entrepreneurs are unwilling to mentor their younger counterparts.

Unlike some other countries, Morocco seems to get a good rating for the business registration process, coming in with one of the lower amounts of difficulties of the list with an average rating of 3.02. The process of starting a business therefore seems to be fairly straightforward. In this respect, the World Bank (2017) mentions that the process of starting a business in Morocco involves four procedures, takes 9.5 days and costs 7.9% of per capita income for both men and women. In terms of ease of starting a business, Morocco ranked 43rd overall out of a total of 190 countries in 2020 (GEM, 2020).

With regard to business financing, which is seen as one of the major obstacles by Moroccan entrepreneurs, institutional measures aimed at rectifying the situation have been adopted. For example, in 2016, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the World Bank Group (WBG) signed an agreement to implement the Boost MENA Initiative to support start-up entrepreneurs and, in particular, young people and women (World Bank, 2016). The aim was to establish a new investment mechanism for MENA countries combining the financing of innovative “start-ups”, including the early phases of high-growth businesses, with significant technical assistance. In particular, the initiative’s integrated approach aimed to

support both the early stages and the riskiest subsequent stages of the start-up cycle. By design, the project was intended to provide long-term support for programs targeting entrepreneurs, such as business accelerators/incubators, seed funding, angel investor networks, participation platforms, social impact funds and venture capital funds.

Factor analyses performed on entrepreneurial barriers produced four groupings as follows: “Infrastructure and government issues”, “Bureaucracy and lack of training”, “Lack of access to financing”, and “External and personal environment”. Similarly to determinants of success and motives, these factors are coherent given that barriers of similar nature are grouped together. For example, the “External and personal environment” factor includes statements “Unreliable and undependable employees”, “Too much competition”, and “Weak economy”. This factor obtained the highest mean factor scores provided by respondents, with 3.56, well ahead of the three other factors (table 11).

## **LIMITS OF THIS RESEARCH**

There are four limitations to this research: 1) in terms of the variables selected, i.e. the questionnaire chosen by authors, 2) in terms of the measurement instruments used in the study. These instruments represent perceptual measures of the objectives pursued by entrepreneurs, as well as success and barrier variables and obstacles, instead of an objective, independent, evaluation, 3) on the choice of a single region to be studied, and 4) in allowing a random gender representation in the sample, which resulted in a female proportion of respondents well-under the actual proportion of female entrepreneurs in the region. Moreover, the sample was drawn exclusively from an urban environment, which precludes any generalization of the results to the population as a whole (a problem of external validity).

## **PRACTICAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Knowing Moroccan entrepreneurs are mainly focused on extrinsic, financial outcomes, should help local governments in Fez, Morocco, and other regions, to put policies in place to better support current and potential entrepreneurs. In addition, knowing that the training and reliability of the Moroccan workforce is the main obstacle for Moroccan entrepreneurs could encourage the various government bodies to develop workforce training programs better adapted to the needs of entrepreneurs in specific sectors. These offerings should be adapted to the economic fabric of each region in the country and evolve with local needs. The above results also suggest that more marketing and management training, as well as mentoring networks, need to be established in order to support future and nascent entrepreneurs. Specific age groups such as people under 30 years of age, male and female, should be encouraged to become self-employed with specific programs within the school system as well as through entrepreneurship centers perhaps developed in conjunction with chambers of commerce.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The limited number of female respondents prevented an examination of gender differences within the sample. Recent publications about female entrepreneurship and economic involvement in Morocco (Naguib, 2022; Bargain and Lo Bue, 2021; Bouzekraoui and Ferhane, 2017; Marotta, 2016) suggest that a complex web of systemic and social barriers face business women in the country. They also emphasize the importance of untapping female talents as a key for the economy of Morocco to develop up to its full potential, while this issue is widespread across numerous countries. Lagarde and Ostry (2018) noted that male wages increased as a consequence of a greater proportion of women in the workforce, due to increased productivity.

This research, which was intended to be exploratory, should be extended to a stratified sample representative of women and men in the region under consideration. The research could also be extended to other urban areas, as well as to rural areas, to enable a comparison between the two environments. Such a study would provide more information to better understand the whole issue of motivations, success factors

and obstacles according to the size of the localities in which SMEs operate, and thus generalize the results to the population as a whole.

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